

# ONE

ORACLE NEWS FOR MIDSIZED ORGANISATIONS



## INSIDE ONE

### Turn the information tide

Today, everyone's faced with a flood of information. Read how midsize companies can cope – and even thrive on it.

### Talking point

We interview an Oracle executive to find out what Oracle offers midsize companies today.

### Spotlight

We look at the technologies and partner solutions ideal for turning a mass of data into information insight.

# WELCOME TO ORACLE ONE – NEWS FOR MIDSIZED ORGANISATIONS

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Are you a mid-sized organisation working hard to keep your business on the road to success? Then Oracle ONE is for you. We've developed this new magazine to make it easier for you to find out about what Oracle can offer you – in ONE place. In this issue, we'll be looking at how to deal with the information explosion – and turn it to your company's advantage.

With information at your fingertips right when you need it, you already have a head start over the competition. With Oracle, you get a reliable,

affordable infrastructure that protects your data and delivers consolidated information so you can make faster decisions.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of ONE and find it useful. We welcome your feedback or suggestions – just call us on **0870 876 8725** or send an e-mail to [uksales\\_ie@oracle.com](mailto:uksales_ie@oracle.com) **ONE**

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# HOW TO TURN THE INFORMATION TIDE

“As a general rule, the most successful man in life is the man who has the best information.” These wise words by the British politician Benjamin Disraeli could have been written yesterday. After all, the key to success has always been a fast and flexible reaction to an external situation. And Disraeli was right when he said “best” and not “most” information. It can be hard to make reliable decisions when you can barely catch your breath between floods of information rolling over you.

We make decisions all day. Shall I take the car or the train to work? Kick off the sales campaign this week or next quarter? Whether our decisions are banal or important, our brain works in the same way every time. It processes existing information and uses it as a basis for its decisions. When we do something, we see its effect, then adapt or correct it if necessary.

### IS THE BRAIN OVERWORKED?

Recent studies have shown that about 10,000 different pieces of information shower down on us in a typical day. We'll take notice of some of them, and forget the rest. Sometimes we may even find it difficult to decide what's important and what isn't. So it's hardly surprising that our brain sometimes incorrectly evaluates information. According to the magazine Newsweek, the memory now tops the list of health issues for busy professionals in their mid-forties. Missing appointments, losing possessions and forgetting names – it happens to us all. We're balancing the demands of work with those of our families while trying to remember a whole host of unrelated bits of information. This is annoying enough in our private life, but lacking information in our jobs can have far-reaching effects. For example, developing a new product based on limited market research is a mistake that lots of young companies make. Without detailed information from multiple sources about the market for the new product, they're inadvertently increasing business risk. Similarly, companies are sometimes puzzled by the fact that a competitor's product consistently outperforms their own. This could simply be due to a lack of information, not only about the competitor's strengths, but also – more importantly – about what their customers really want.

### IN A COMPANY'S COCKPIT

Managers who make the wrong decision due to a lack of vital data may be putting their company at risk. The availability of knowledge is a prerequisite for making the right decisions. However, many managers have their work cut out just dealing with the flood of information they're subjected to every day. It can be really hard to make a quick decision needing information that cuts across, say, sales, marketing and financial data – although this is something managers need to do practically every day. It can take time to collect, consolidate and analyse all this information. In short, managers need a complete, consistent view of all their business operations at their fingertips – and in real time too. >>>>



“It can be hard to make a quick decision needing information that cuts across sales, marketing and financial data – although this is something managers need to do practically every day.”

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>>>> We tend to think this is a new problem, but it goes back to the 1960s, when a leading American systems scientist, Professor Dr. Russell Ackoff, talked about management information systems (MIS). The idea was to filter out the right information from the flood and process it so it was easy for a manager to understand quickly. MIS have evolved over the years, and today they're known as business intelligence (BI) systems. They help us combine information in different formats, analyse facts and figures and research them further, and make reliable decisions based on complete, relevant and up-to-date data.

### A GLANCE INTO THE CRYSTAL BALL

BI has proved its worth in many areas – financial management, supply-chain management, and especially sales. Based on analyses of historical customer behaviour, the system can forecast what a customer may buy in the future. It does the heavy lifting of integrating information and evaluating trends and tendencies so that managers can be prepared for changes in their customers' requirements. At the Gartner Business Intelligence Summit in March 2007, the analysts predicted that by 2010, competitive pressure would be so great that 80 per cent of companies would need to monitor all customer-facing areas of their business. Clearly, the importance of accurate information and timely analyses is growing by the day.

### MAKING BI A PART OF YOUR WORKING DAY

Many mid-sized companies are aware of the potential benefits of BI for their business, but are understandably wary of potentially disrupting information systems to implement it. However, this reluctance is unnecessary – for example, many of Oracle's BI technologies plug into existing infrastructures, such as Microsoft®. NET or Windows®. Easy to use, and with an attractive price, there's no reason why mid-sized companies have to do without real-time visibility or faster, better-informed decision-making. It's a great way to turn the flood of information to their advantage – and thrive on it. **ONE**

# TALKING POINT: HOW DOES ORACLE HELP MIDSIZED COMPANIES?



We caught up with **Gary Pugh** to ask him what Oracle really has to offer mid-sized businesses today.

### Q: WHAT IT CHALLENGES DO MIDSIZED COMPANIES FACE TODAY?

**A:** Many of their challenges come down to information and the way it's protected and managed. A lot of companies put in standalone systems when they were small to manage single tasks – they didn't have the resources to do otherwise. Once they grow, they find it hard to cope with the exponential growth in data. The key is to ensure this data is secure and protected, then aggregate it across applications. That way, companies can pinpoint the information they need and make faster, more reliable decisions, as well as providing a better service to their customers.

### Q: SO HOW CAN ORACLE HELP?

**A:** First and foremost, by providing a reliable, streamlined and integrated infrastructure. This protects your information while integrating with your existing systems. Also, Oracle helps you ensure your various systems work together and consolidates information across them, even if they're from different vendors. That makes it easy to add new applications as you grow – they'll always fit into the infrastructure. With everything integrated, your business processes will become easier to manage too. And that means you can change them or add new ones whenever you need to.

### Q: IF I'M A MIDSIZED COMPANY, WHAT BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT TO SEE FROM WORKING WITH ORACLE?

**A:** You're likely to see cost savings, increased productivity and better customer relationships. Why cost reductions? Because an Oracle infrastructure gives you a common data repository, multi-level data protection and automated security processes, therefore it's quicker and cheaper to back up and secure your data. It also means IT maintenance costs less. As for productivity, consolidated information means you can work more efficiently and make decisions faster. And your customer relationships will improve because you'll detect any issues quickly and react swiftly.

### Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF MY DATA IS STORED IN APPLICATIONS FROM DIFFERENT VENDORS? DO I HAVE TO QUERY EACH ONE SEPARATELY?

**A:** No, that's the beauty of it. Let's say your infrastructure is Windows-based and you have best-of-breed applications for ERP and supply chain, plus a specialised finance application. With Oracle, you can consolidate and interlink them so that you're searching multiple sources with a single query. What comes out is useful information, not a group of unrelated facts. Also, everyone is using the same version of the data with a view customised to suit their role. That's why we say that Oracle gives you insight from your information, not just the results of a data query.

### Q: WILL I HAVE TO BUY A BIG SYSTEM WHERE I DON'T NEED HALF THE FUNCTIONALITY?

**A:** No – buy what you need now and what you'll really use. That's how to get the most benefit and value out of your IT. You'll find that Oracle solutions for mid-sized companies are priced attractively, too. You can add solutions to meet your needs as you grow. In short, Oracle means stability and confidence for years to come – and an infrastructure that will always be a help to you rather than a hindrance. **ONE**



**Gary Pugh**  
VP Applications & Industry Marketing  
EMEA

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## SPOTLIGHT: INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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In this section, we take a look at the topic of information insight from a more technical perspective. Can IT managers ensure interoperability without adding to their workload?

Interconnecting information systems and processes can increase efficiency and keep operating costs down. It ensures the completeness and reliability of critical business information while reducing the maintenance workload. But how easy is it to put in place? An Oracle infrastructure is open and integrates into any environment – Windows, .NET or Linux® – so there's no need to replace your existing architecture. Oracle also supports all your applications, so your users can work with one pool of information that spans different data sources. You can also automate key IT processes to improve security and help ensure regulatory compliance – without creating more work for yourself. With a streamlined, efficient infrastructure, you can reduce costs and maintenance, and get more value out of the systems you already have.

How does this interoperability work in practice? Oracle has packaged its database for mid-sized companies with Oracle Database 11g Standard Edition and Oracle Database 11g Standard Edition One. With Oracle Fusion Middleware, you can start off with the modules for data integration to interconnect your data sources, then add other modules like Business Process Management and Business Intelligence. If you're not already running Oracle Database 11g, you might be interested in Oracle Business Intelligence Standard Edition One. It gives you the database, the key middleware and BI features in an easy-to-install package. It runs on a single server and is priced for mid-sized organisations. As your company grows, you can easily add new systems to the infrastructure and extend its scope. **ONE**

## ORACLE FINANCING: BUY, INVEST AND GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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By reducing upfront costs for Oracle and partner products and services, Oracle Financing makes it easy and affordable for mid-sized companies to buy the right solution at the right time. While capital and cash flow are everyday concerns, these issues should not prevent you from investing in and implementing the IT solution you need to grow, succeed and improve competitiveness.

Payment solutions from Oracle Financing can make it easy and affordable for you to get the solution you need, when you need it.

The benefits of payment solutions from Oracle Financing:

- Improve cash flow with reduced upfront investment requirements and payments spread over time
- Increase your purchasing power by accessing future budgets
- Adapt to business change with a flexible and predictable payment structure with no surprises
- Enhance your investment returns by mapping payments to benefits
- Preserve your existing credit lines **ONE**

## HOW THE CREDIT CRUNCH CAN HELP GROWING BUSINESSES TAKE CONTROL OF IT FINANCING

Previously Indy Kooiker, Financing Programmes Manager, EMEA, examined the obstacles mid-sized businesses face in securing funding for technology investments in the UK and Europe. Here, Indy Kooiker, looks at the "credit crunch". Is it a threat or perhaps an opportunity for mid-sized companies to reassess their IT financing options?

As the banking and finance world reels from a series of crises, mid-sized businesses would be wise to consider their future IT financing options.

Opinions on the depth of the economic downturn differ. The conciliatory tone adopted by lenders in public belies the "evidence" offered in research reports. For example, a report on EU bank lending, published by the European Central Bank in late 2007, suggested that European banks are cutting back lending to mid-sized businesses.

The credit crunch effect is further confirmed in a report by the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) in November 2007, which found 12 percent of mid-sized businesses believed that access to funding was being withdrawn.

How best to respond? The wait-and-see approach is not an option. Now more than ever, companies must invest in technology to enhance competitive advantage and grow.

But here's the thing: is there any real need for companies to harness their business growth prospects to the flagging fortunes of the financial community? Or should companies be looking elsewhere? Perhaps for a lender like Oracle Financing that understands mid-sized businesses, how they operate, how they buy technology and crucially, the defining role played by IT in a mid-sized company's development?

### TAKING STOCK

Even in the good times, funding a major technology purchase wasn't easy. Banks are uncomfortable funding IT investment outside the corporate arena, so they minimise their risk by forcing buyers to take out several finance agreements for every purchase. It's a time-consuming and expensive process that will not improve as lenders withdraw deeper into their comfort zone.

So what's the answer? Simple: it is that regardless of the state of the economy, businesses that take control of their IT spending will grow and succeed.

The process starts with a company becoming more discerning about its approach to IT financing.

### ORACLE FINANCING: PUTTING YOU IN CONTROL OF YOUR TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS

Oracle Financing understands how technology financing works. By contrast with the mainstream lenders, we make the links between finance, technology and business success for mid-sized companies.

We understand that investing in IT is a long-term commitment. Our services are tailored to support the long-term business-focused view of technology that characterises high-performing companies.

We offer cash-flow-enhancing flexible payment structures that allow companies to access the technology they need at competitive rates and with manageable repayment terms.

Choosing Oracle Financing gives mid-sized companies the support they need to maximise the value of their technology assets. We're with our customers at every stage of the technology life cycle, helping them develop legacy systems without financial constraint and without fear of the credit crunch. **ONE**



**Indy Kooiker**  
Financing Programmes Manager,  
EMEA

# RELIABLE SOLUTIONS FOR IMMEDIATE BENEFITS

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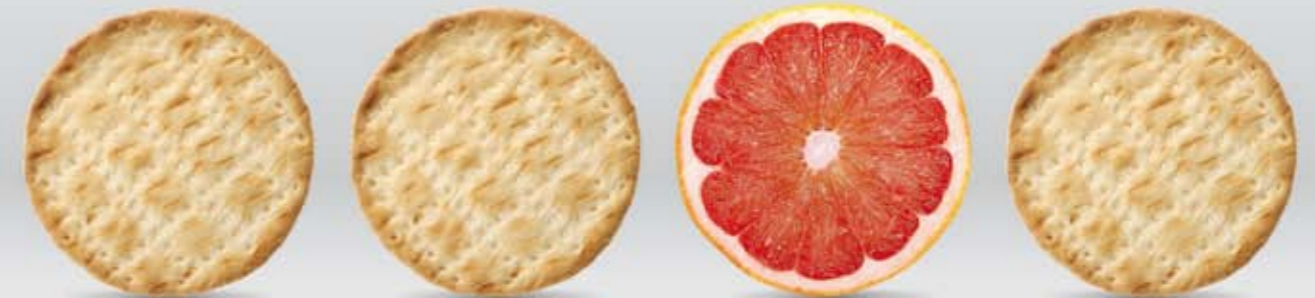
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# PERFORMANCE – FIX IT BEFORE OR AFTER THE DISASTER?

**David Phizacklea**  
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The old adage of “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” may ring true in day-to-day life, however in the world of database and database performance, the requirement to do something rather than nothing is the answer rather than the question.

In the vast majority of database systems, the original concept and design does not fit the actual customer scope and requirement. The deployment of the database and/or IT system is restricted by budget, so capacity and product planning is usually an afterthought. System testing rarely meets the expectations of the system, and indeed with database technology, the testing (if carried out following installation) will not produce any meaningful results, because “load” on the database is minimal.

All this points customers at remedial work being required, but how do they know when this is necessary?

How many times have you said or heard it said, “The system is running slowly today”?

How many times has a user said to you, “It takes longer and longer every day to log on to the system”?

How many times has your system crashed and needed to be rebooted?

Has a customer ever said, “I tried to log into your system to place an order, but it was so slow I gave up”?

All the aforementioned comments (and plenty more that are said every day) can point to system or database performance problems. These problems cost the company money, as well as credibility in the marketplace.

So let’s assume that this is the starting point for a system health-check, where capturing operational data for analysis and employing capacity-planning policies begin to paint the picture of the problems now, and where it all went wrong. From a consultant’s perspective, the first piece of the jigsaw is to examine any changes that may have been made to the system or infrastructure. These changes can include software upgrades, new programs, patches within the system or maybe data migrations. It is also common for a consultant to hear “Nothing on the system has changed at all”, when it is now going slower or has crashed.

The real issue here for the consultant is not really what to do or how to do it; it can be much more fundamental than this. Today’s systems can have such complexity that confusion becomes the norm. JoraPh’s health checks have occasionally produced reports that run into hundreds of pages for one database. It is very easy to lose track of an issue, or not even see it in the morass of reports. It is also easy to target the high-impact areas and forget to look at the items that leave a smaller footprint on the list.



Traditional performance-tuning and remedial work on Oracle databases is still a necessity, but as systems become more complex and applications use a much wider spectrum of product within the database, automation becomes the key to proactive maintenance. Automating the health-check process and understanding the output from it are vital for rapid problem-solving. The JoraPh health check product, JoraScope, has been developed to provide swift and accurate details of issues in Oracle database environments. It looks at the application from a designer’s perspective and takes basic principles of design and performance. It runs over 300 scripts to check performance, security, legality and reliability, and provides a result set that is analytical in its reporting, but easy for the customer to understand. Any required remedial actions are documented, and the customer then has the chance to effect these autonomously, or to arrange for JoraPh to carry out this work.

Once the required actions have been taken, and the database is back to a stable position, it is recommended that the health check be run on a quarterly basis, thereby ensuring that any new issues are discovered and resolved at an early stage.

JoraPh provides a remote managed DBA service including help desk, and as part of this the health check is an automated procedure that ensures a proactive approach to support.

So, with over 180 man-years of Oracle experience within JoraPh Consulting, our recommendation is always to “fix it” *before* the disaster. If you think that your system matches the scenario above, please contact us; hundreds of other companies already have, and all now benefit from databases that operate to an optimum level, and from systems that are stable and perform. **ONE**

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